



**Doing
the
Most
Good**

The Salvation Army-Family Intervention Service The Independent Living Skills Program



NA HO`OLA PONO

“Moving Towards a Life of Righteousness”

ILP Orientation: It's All Good to GO !!

On August 26, 2009, we held the first Independent Living Program Orientation. It was an effective collaborative effort between the Department of Human Services - Child Welfare Services and the ILP program. It was always our thought that if we worked collaboratively from the beginning by getting foster youth into the ILP program, then we



Some of the foster parents enjoying snacks and information at the ILP Orientation.

Even Peggy Hilton, Section

could expect greater success for our youth when exiting both the foster care system and the ILP program. The ILP Orientation also gave us the opportunity to work with the foster parents and provide them with valuable information about the program services and to answer questions they might have. While Uncle Kalani was busy doing the ILP presentation for the youth that had attended, Uncle Warren was the facilitator for the adults and foster parents in the adjoining conference room. The ILP Director, Denise Pacheco and another ILP worker, Cheryl Dias, assisted with both sessions. Even Peggy Hilton, Section

Administrator and some of the DHS social workers were present and stressed to the adults the benefits both the youth and the foster parents would received by participating in the ILP program. The responses from everyone were positive. Everyone agreed it was successful, informative and a fun event. Both the parents and youth appreciated the pizzas, pupu platters and drinks that were also served. See Ya!!!



Uncle Kalani with some of the youth that attended the ILP Orientation.

Mauna Kea: Gateway to the Stars

The ILP program scheduled a two part activity that ended with the students taking a special journey up to the 9,000 feet Ellison Onizuka Visitor's Center on the majestic slopes of Mauna Kea. This activity was both to learn of the valuable observatory resources available on Mauna Kea and to look at career

possibilities for those interested in the area of science and the universe. Our activity started with a visit to the `Imiloa Astronomy Center on July 1, 2009. Our ILSP youth had a good time interacting with the different science and cultural displays. We viewed a 3D presentation of the observatories stationed on

top of Mauna Kea complete with 3D glasses. You could hear our youth laughing as the 3D effect made (Page 4)



Some of our participants on the first stop of their journey, `Imiloa Astronomy Center off of Komohana Street.

The Salvation Army-Family Intervention Services

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Mission Statement

“To provide youth with skills for a healthy life and to instill purpose, hope and vision to youth and their families.”



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Intervention Services

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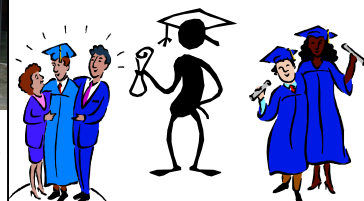
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"Can't Wait Till I'm 18"

Every year I hear from some youth in foster care repeatedly expressing their frustrations by saying, "I can't wait till I turn 18 years old, then nobody can tell me nothing and I can do whatever I want". Whenever I hear this, it saddens me because it is a statement based on "free will" and not one based on preparedness. I would like to share a story written by one of our former foster youth who had participated in the ILP program several years ago. She was in constant frustration, usually on the run and not stable in her placement homes. She was one of the youth that often made this statement based on free will and really not prepared for her fast approaching adult life. This is her story.

Aloha, my name is Brandi Das. I am 20 years old and currently residing on the island of O`ahu. During my time in the foster care system, I was sent to the Big Island, where I was placed in several foster homes and attended several high schools.

Like many foster youth, I have been tossed around from foster home to foster home, then reunited with my parents just to watch them relapse of drug use. A situation that also lead to me being physically abused and

being placed again in the foster care system, which at times seemed as bad as being home with my drug addicted and abusing parents. I could say my life was a living hell from the start of my birth. I can't really complain because I realize there are families out there who are going through or even worse situations than mine was.

I can say that I have been through a lot, like all youth placed in the foster care system and like many of us, has had to overcome many obstacles and barriers. From growing up and having to raise my younger siblings at a very young age to sleeping in places no child should ever be sleeping. To being abused physically, sexually and mentally and distrusting a system that was there to protect me. Experiences that no child should ever go through just because of the poor choices and lifestyle our parents made, instead of raising us and providing us with the love and care all children deserves.

I feel that if the lord thought I couldn't handle the things I had to go through, then he wouldn't have put me through those terrifying and frustrating experiences. In some ironic way, I am thankful for that because I wouldn't be the strong-willed, soft

hearted and strong minded person that I am today. From all the things I have gone through, I made a promise to myself that if I ever had children, I would never put them through the same path that I have been on. Well, on June 16, 2009 I had given birth to a beautiful baby girl and to this day I still hold true to the promise I had made. I'd like to think that my life is like a book and the things that I have been through are just paragraphs in the first chapter of my life. A new chapter had started the day my daughter was born and I became a single parent. I plan to make this chapter the best one yet. I am taking vital steps toward attending college and intent of enrolling in the Nursing Program. I am still receiving assistance and help from the ILP program on the Big Island and Uncle Kalani. My goal is to make positive differences in my life, especially for my daughter and to give her the good life that I never had. When I finish my college goals I would like to pursue a nursing career and work at Kapi`olani Hospital and work with other abused children.

Like many of our youth, they are resilient and are able to make positive contributions in their lives, for those around them and their community.

Hurray: ILP Starts Again

Every year, youth that participates with the ILP program wonders and calls our office to question, "Uncle, when is the ILP starting?" Even high schools that we are partnered with ask us the same questions. We usually start our program in the middle of September. The



Our ILP youth from Kea`au high school working on an ILP activity stressing transition.

reason we start several weeks after the start of school year is two-fold. One is to stabilize the youths attending college that had graduated from our program. Some of them were even placed in the student dorms.

The time used in securing their needs will bet-

ter facilitate acclimating themselves

towards the expected rigors of college life. The second reason is to give our high school youths time to acclimate and stabilizing themselves to their new schedules, classes and teachers. Having youths and schools calling us validates the importance that our ILP program plays in their lives and future goals. Or is it the fun, camaraderie and hands-on way we teach our participants vital life skills? We'd like to think it's all of the above and more. (continue page 3 ILP)

Education Training Voucher Workshop: Hawaii Community College



Some of our youth that attended the ETV Workshop. Computers were available to help complete the budget and student expense portion of the ETV.

On August 17, 2009, in collaboration between the ILP, Geist Foster Alumni Program and Hawaii Community College, a workshop to secure the Education Training Vouchers was conducted. The ETV is a financial aid award provided by DHS-CWS to help former foster youth that are attending college. The ETV awards helps to offset college and living expenses that their scholarships and grants does not adequately cover. There were almost 25 former foster youth that had attended the event. Some of these youth were continuing students, as well as youth experiencing their first college semester. Regardless of how much financial assistance each youth are awarded, because they are not able to depend on their biological families for help,

ILP (continued)

The 2009-2010 year for ILP started the week of September 14th through the 18th. For the first couple of weeks our activities were based on building unity in our groups. For many, it was a reunification for returning students and for new participants, it was an opportunity to experience what ILP is all about and to clarify their stakes in attending the program. We run our groups for two hour sessions. That's a long time for

every little bit counts towards securing greater college successes.

Our programs have been strengthening our partnership with Hawaii Community College, a vital resource which produces great benefits as both the college and our programs reap valuable dividends. We are better able to secure valuable financial resource entitlements that our youth are applicable for and the college benefits by our programs' efforts in better preparing our youth towards college.

On the day of the ETV workshop, we had to accommodate some of our attending youth who were also working and started the workshop at 5 pm in the early evening. We were fortunate as the Hawaii Community College provided us with a classroom that had over 20 computers with online access. These computers became very instrumental to our participants as they had access to their college financial information online and could download and



our youth to give up without realizing their stakes in the program. Another objective during the first weeks is for our youths to get a better idea of who they are and not the negative perception of what people think a foster youth is. We did some fun personality and interest assessments based on their strengths, instead of focusing on their shortfalls. It's so inspiring to see the positive transformation of each individual group from each school. Seeing the uncertainty on their faces when they first start

print out all required financial information and documentation. The amount of youth attending validates not only how importantly vital our ongoing partnership with Hawaii Community College is to youth choosing college as their post-high option, but is also a testament to our vital partnership between the Independent Living Program and the Geist Foster Alumni



Uncle Glenn, Auntie Cheryl and Uncle Warren facilitating the ETV Workshop. You could tell by the youths' attention given, they really needed that extra money to help with their college expenses. .

Program. There were youth applying for the first time as well as those that have applied in the past towards valuable Education Training Vouchers. The youths that were reapplying has a better understanding of the budget and expense requirements. Having to assist these youths, providing continuing guidance even after leaving the system and navigating them through a rigid process validates the commitment of our programs towards our youth.

the ILP program, much like how they view their foster care situation, to finding new hope towards their futures. One youth commented, "Besides learning vital skills and options available to us, we are better able to support one another because we are all foster youth". Well, the staff of the Independent Living Program are looking forward towards another year. I certainly hope the youth participating feels the same way too. See Ya!!

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Future ILP Newsletter

- World of Work activity
"Clarifying the Path Towards College"
- Good Citizenship Event
- Toys for Tots Gift Wrap
- Special ILSP Activities



What Our Youth Says

In our newsletter we strive to provide a vehicle where the concerns and voices of the youth we serve are important. Oftentimes, they feel that their voices go unheard and no one cares of what they think. Not true. We asked our participants how they felt about being a foster youth? The majority of them commented on how sorry they felt about themselves and the situation they were in. They also commented on how frustrated and powerless they felt. Only one youth commented on feeling safe and being away from the violence. **When we asked them how many foster homes have you been placed in**, their answers ranged from three to fifteen homes. One foster youth said that she was placed in close to fifty different homes. Here are other samples of their thoughts and experiences:

Name one difficult thing about being a foster youth? One of my greatest difficulty, is being away from family (good or bad). Another stated being separated from their siblings. There were a lot of youth that said that they are always being treated differently than their foster parents' biological children.

Most of our participants expressed their desires to be treated like a family member and not seen only as an income resource. Several commented on feeling ashamed and being invisible, not even willing to let their peers know that they were placed in foster care and risk being asked why. They also commented on the importance of having genuine support. It was the consensus that with the right support, it's easier talking about the things that went wrong. If people support you, they show that they care. It's harder to give up when you know someone cares for you. They also stated how hard it is to go through foster care, being frustrated and stressed out without support. Many of them provided support and encouraging words for each other. The majority of them said to "Stay in there and hold on", "Learn from the mistakes of others" and "Don't give up". Our youth always state how we inspire them not realizing how much they inspire us.

Mauna Kea (continued from page 1)



Uncle Warren checking out the rings of Saturn. We all got to check out different constellations, planets and moon, as staff focused the telescopes.

it seem like the observatory's telescope was going to touch our noses. On July 4, 2009, we took our youth on the second part of our activity and journeyed to the Ellison Onizuka Visitor's Center. For just about all our youth, it was the first time on the mountain. We arrived at the visitor's center just before 5 pm in the evening and you could feel the temperature dropping fast. Driving up, the clouds shrouding Mauna Kea, and feeling the cold mountain air didn't cool

down their anxiousness. Some of them commented that we were driving through the clouds. As we approached the visitor's center, the sky opened up. When we reached our destination, we took our stoves and began heating up the water for our saimin and cocoa. When the water was ready, so was our youth as the temperature dropped below the 50's. Some of our younger participants challenged one another who could remain in their shorts and tee shirts the longest in the cold Mauna Kea air. After the ILP youth had their fill of saimin and cocoa to warm up, we all heard a presentation given by a former high school principal, Donald Romero. His presentation was based on the Hawaiian Star Chart utilized for Polynesian navigation. It was very interesting, yet those that attended the activity with us were anxious to gaze at the universe with the telescopes that the visitor's center made

available to us. Before long, we were all looking at the moon up close and viewed Saturn and the rings that revolved around that planet. We also looked at a constellation called the Jewelry Box because it displayed colors like a jewelry box. You could see and feel their excitement. Even for the ILP staff that attended, we all shared that same excitement. No one missed all the Fourth of July activities that took place on the bottom of the mountain. It was unanimous, this activity was COOL, Mauna Kea cool.



Cooking saimin and hot cocoa to warm up against the cold temperatures of Mauna Kea, but it was all cool. We all had a good time.